

FAMILY ALLOWANCES AND EUGENICS*

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Past Attitude of Eugenists

IT is well to begin a discussion of the eugenic aspects of family allowances by briefly recalling what has been the attitude of eugenists to family allowances in the past. In the years following 1918, J. M. Keynes was preaching a then popular doctrine—that over-population was a major cause of the last war. A glance at the files of the *EUGENICS REVIEW* shows that eugenists too shared this fear, and were especially worried by the excessive fertility of the poorest social classes compared with that of the middle and upper classes. Typical was Professor Carr-Saunders's review of Eleanor Rathbone's *Disinherited Family*:

"Miss Rathbone makes out a very strong case in reply to the objection most often raised, namely, that any form of Family Endowment will encourage an increase of population among the less desirable classes. We are in complete agreement. It will, on the contrary, probably tend to lower the birth-rate among those who now have the largest families, because it is the raising of the standard of living and of the dignity and status of the mother, which more than anything else helps to stem the devastating torrent of children."

Typical, too, at the same time, was Professor R. A. Fisher's advocacy of family endowment as a method of raising the birth-rate of that portion of the population "in which the *Eugenics Society* has always been especially interested, that portion which is popularly called the upper and middle classes."

In 1926 the *Eugenics Society* adopted an *Outline of Practical Eugenics Policy*, a statement advocating "a scientifically designed system of family allowances" as the "most

potent means" of altering the differential birth-rate in favour of the better-off classes. The statement added: "The *Society* is strongly opposed to redistribution by means of taxation, or to the allowances being made a charge on the State, and favours the establishment of equalization pools among the employing bodies of the salaried professions and skilled occupations." This was followed in 1927 by Parliamentary lobbying for higher income-tax children's rebates, and for exemption from taxation of maternity and education expenses. From 1928 to 1932 I have been unable to find any reference to family allowances in the columns of the *EUGENICS REVIEW*. Interest in the subject was apparently on the decline among eugenists.

The new knowledge of population trends which came in the 1930's set eugenists thinking of family allowances again—from a new angle. The *Aims and Objects* of the *Society*, adopted in 1934, reaffirmed the principles of the *Society's* statement of 1926 on family allowances. In the following year the *Society* set up a Committee on Positive Eugenics, out of which grew the Population Investigation Committee, which, with David Glass as research secretary, has done such fine work in promoting the study of population trends and of foreign birth-rate policies. Out of this work in turn grew the *Society's* collaboration with PEP in forming the Population Policies Committee, whose task, interrupted by war, was to work out a population policy for this country. Family allowances have been a major topic of study for both of these research bodies.

The *Eugenics Society* has thus sought to alter birth-date differentials as between social and occupational groups in favour of the wealthier groups. At first it stressed mainly reduction of the fertility of the "less desirable classes . . . who now have the

* The substance of a paper read before the *Eugenics Society* on September 24th, 1941.

largest families"; more recently it has stressed the need to raise fertility among the "salaried professions and skilled occupations." In both cases it has tended to believe (or hope) that family allowances would be the "most potent means" of achieving the desired object. Two big questions are here involved: (1) what social groups, if any, should be encouraged to have more children? (2) If we can identify such social groups of desirable parents, can family allowances assist them to more prolific parenthood?

Intelligence Classes are not Social Classes

The real problem, of course, is how to raise the fertility of desirable parents, whatever social class they may be in. Let us take the level of mental ability as a criterion of the desirable parent—it is the criterion most favoured by eugenicists. Is there in fact a high correlation between social status and intelligence? Are the above-average in intelligence below average in fertility? The evidence in the whole of this field is largely fragmentary, often contradictory. Most of the research until quite recently has been done by isolated individuals on very small, often unrepresentative, groups of school-children. The intelligence tests used have frequently been subjects of controversy; the measurements of social status are commonly unsatisfactory; even the statistical methods employed have often been challenged. It is only in recent years that a few fairly large-scale surveys, employing adequate statistical techniques, have been conducted. Outstanding instances are the surveys of Fraser Roberts (3,300 school-children in Bath), Moshinsky and Gray (nearly 10,000 London school-children), and the Scottish intelligence survey of an entire age-group of children (not analyzed by family size or social status).

Three factors are involved: the child's Intelligence Quotient, the number of its brothers and sisters, and the social status of its parents. It is no good generalizing from a correlation between any two of these factors if we ignore the third. Thus a nega-

tive correlation has been shown to exist between a child's I.Q. and the size of its sibship. Early American work gives values of about -0.30 (cf. Chapman and Wiggins, 1925; Terman, 1925; Willoughby, 1928). More recently Thurstone and Jenkins (1931) found a correlation of only -0.19 . British work gives quite low values: Pearson and Moul (1925): no correlation between intelligence and family size among East London Jewish children*; Sutherland and Thomson (1926): about -0.20 ; Shepherd Dawson (1932): between -0.10 and -0.20 ; Fraser Roberts (1938-39): up to -0.23 (only 0.12 in his largest group, senior elementary children). Must we simply conclude that larger families tend to produce less intelligent children to the extent indicated by these correlation coefficients? We cannot, because we have ignored the third factor—social status. Since both I.Q. and family size may vary with social status, our correlations must be *standardized* for social status before we can draw any conclusions. Wherever this is done, the value of the I.Q.-sibship correlation is reduced. Thus Chapman and Wiggins give -0.33 for the intelligence-fertility correlation; but this is reduced to -0.27 if social class is held fixed. Sutherland (1929) studied 3,100 children of one social grade alone—Yorkshire miners—and found a fertility-intelligence correlation of only -0.13 . Sutherland and Thomson and Fraser Roberts admit that lower values result from standardizing for social status, but give no figures.

Moshinsky's (1939) findings are of great interest. In all groups *selected for brightness* (e.g., scholarship holders), children from small families preponderated. Fraser Roberts also found that the fertility of parents of gifted children was low, whether they were well off or poor.† But among groups *not*

* Pearson and Moul suggested that this was because most of their children came from Russian and Polish immigrant families whose fertility was still largely unrestricted.

† This finding may be partly due to the fact that a considerable proportion of working-class children who win free places never enter secondary schools, because their parents prefer them to go to work. This would tend to favour bright children from the smaller families.

selected for intelligence, Moshinsky found no intelligence-fertility correlation except among junior elementary school-children, for whom the correlation was -0.23 . A split-up of this group according to parents' occupations showed that family size and intelligence were *not* correlated among the majority, but only among children of clerical and commercial employees (-0.24), and of skilled wage earners (-0.27).

There would thus appear to be a slight, but unmistakable tendency for the above-average in intelligence to be below the average in fertility, but it is not at all clear that this tendency is present in all social or occupational groups. If we examine similarly the relation between I.Q. and socio-occupational status, there is no doubt that the hierarchy of *mean* I.Q. values tends to correspond to the hierarchy of social and occupational groups. *Average* intelligence tends to rise with social status, but again the correlation coefficients are low. The majority of studies give values up to $+0.25$. Intelligence differences between families in the *same* social class are far more important than differences in the *average* intelligence of different social classes. Since our chances of predicting a child's I.Q. from its parents' social status are still at most something like nine to one against, we have to accept the conclusion of Evelyn Lawrence's careful study (1931):

"It becomes clear that for any definite plans for social reform based upon the differential inheritance of intelligence, social class is not a satisfactory grouping. Either some basis of classification resulting in more homogeneous and more widely differentiated groups needs to be found, or we must realize that the only safe unit by which to assess intelligence is the individual, or at most the family."

Thus, if the qualities measured by intelligence tests are the criteria of desirable parents, there are practically no social groups which we can single out as desirable (or undesirable) parents. The desirable and undesirable are to be found in all classes, and, although there certainly is a tendency

for the stratification of average intelligence to approximate towards the stratification of classes, there is no real sense in which we are justified in speaking of the "less desirable classes." There may be a few exceptions, among professional groups selected for their intelligence, where there might be grounds for special measures to encourage parenthood. Thus teachers' children come very near the top of the average intelligence scale, while teachers are one of the least fertile groups in the community. But eugenicists cannot adopt as their general strategy an attempt to raise fertility in all the higher social groups as the best method of increasing the number of able children in the community. Moshinsky and Gray (1938) show that among London children the proportion of children with I.Q.'s of 130 or more is higher among professional workers than among clerical and commercial workers, and higher among them than among skilled manual workers. But to increase the number of able children by 5 per cent would involve *doubling* the birth-rate among professional workers (who contribute only 5 per cent of the total number of able children); whereas it would only involve raising the fertility of black-coated workers by one-third, or of skilled workers by one-sixth (because they contribute 31 per cent of all able children). They further find that while all upper-class children, intelligent or not, receive post-primary education, only 30 per cent of able children of skilled workers, only 20 per cent of able children of unskilled manual workers ever get beyond elementary school. The greater part of the superior ability of working-class children is simply wasted. It is still far more important to be born to parents well provided with money than to parents well endowed with intelligence.

Raising Fertility a General Problem

It is, therefore, fruitless for eugenicists to hunt for social or occupational *groups* whose parenthood should be encouraged. Our broad strategy must be, by *general* measures, to encourage healthy parenthood in *all* classes, and, by *specific* measures, to hunt

out *individuals* who are undesirable as parents. This latter task is essentially a matter of personal case-work, which can only be done effectively when (a) the necessary case-working agencies have been created, (b) social workers and doctors generally are thoroughly trained in problems of human heredity, and (c) far more is known about human genetics than at present. Unfortunately we are as yet nowhere near fulfilment of these conditions—research into human genetics in particular is a neglected subject in this country.

Is a system of family allowances one of the measures we should advocate to encourage healthy parenthood in all classes? In so far as family allowances would tend to reduce economic inequalities and to increase equality of opportunity for children—to introduce a more equal social environment—eugenists should welcome them. For greater equality of opportunity would enlarge our eugenic knowledge, by making it easier to determine which differences between children are mainly attributable to nature, and which mainly to nurture. But I am not convinced that any conceivable system of family allowances can, by itself, go very far towards equalizing economic opportunities, not even if it were combined with decent minimum wages, as advocated by Seeborn Rowntree.

Nor do I believe that any family allowance system can by itself do much to alter the basic trend of human fertility. Within the framework of our present economic system and class structure family allowances are bound to be at best a palliative social service, at worst petty bribes to parenthood. Family allowances by themselves cannot remove the basic social frustrations which inhibit parenthood—the aspirations of the mass of people for a fuller, freer life, the force of “social capillarity” in a politically democratic but economically oligarchic, competitive society, the feelings of insecurity engendered by *man-made*—but apparently uncontrollable—“economic blizzards,” and total warfare. These frustrations are rooted in the ownership, inheritance, or control of property. Family allowances will not alter

the fact that 6 per cent of the population own 80 per cent of the nation’s capital.

H. G. Wells, one of the first Englishmen to ponder on the significance of the falling birth-rate, wrote in 1906 of

“the enhanced sense of the child in middle-class life. . . . There has come an intensified respect for children, an immense increase in the trouble, attention and expenditure devoted to them—and a very natural and human accompaniment in the huge fall in the middle-class birth-rate. It is felt that to bear and rear children is the most noble and splendid and responsible thing in life, and an increasing number of people modestly evade it. People see more clearly the social service of parentage, and are more inclined to demand a recognition from the State for this service.”

He added that

“the internal structure of the middle-class family is altering fundamentally with the general growth of intelligence, with the higher education of women, with the comings and goings for this purpose and that, the bicycles and games, *the enlarged social appetites and opportunities of a new time.*”

What was then true of the middle classes is to-day becoming true of the intelligent in all classes. “Social appetites and opportunities” have been immeasurably enlarged since Victorian times, but their fulfilment and enjoyment are to be achieved only by abstaining from parenthood. Our civilization has, in fact, given us a promise, but no fulfilment. It has promised us a brave new world of security, a decent standard of living, reasonable leisure, a general raising of the cultural attainments of the mass of people. Most people to-day believe these things to be within our reach. But instead we are presented with “poverty in the midst of plenty,” unemployment at times of up to a third of our material and human resources, mass under-consumption coupled with mass destruction of basic necessities, social insecurity which breeds excessive thrift and fosters gambling on football pools or stock markets, leisure exploited by commercialized

forms of passive amusement, and total warfare, of which the fears and frustrations of bewildered peoples were an essential precondition. All the "good things of life" have been commercialized, have become *alternatives* to parenthood. Parenthood is now merely one among many desirable ways of spending money.

In our civilization prestige goes primarily with the ownership of property and conspicuous *spending*—preferably without conspicuous *working* to justify it. As long as this is so, it will determine the moral tone of our whole society, and men will strive for ownership. Social promotion *depends* on striving, in competition with others and often to others' detriment, for a higher income or greater possessions. Social security, too, depends on climbing the income and property ladder. At whatever rung one starts, the concentration of wealth—mainly by inheritance—into a few hands so handicaps the mass of people, that it is a ladder best climbed by those unencumbered with too many children. These basic frustrations to parenthood will have to be removed by providing a fuller, more equal life for all, by democratizing our economic life. We shall have to strive for a social order in which social promotion depends on ability and social prestige attaches to social service. A higher income would certainly be the reward of conspicuous social achievement, but of nothing else. It must be a society in which one can be poor and yet secure—in which failure to distinguish oneself does not mean exclusion from an adequate minimum of the material and spiritual goods of life. I do not believe that we shall achieve a lasting rise in the birth-rate without some such social reconstruction—and that is a matter of economic planning and of maintaining full employment in peace as in war. Family endowment is neither an alternative to, nor the main method of achieving, social reconstruction—but it is indispensable for the completion of such changes.

Possibilities of Family Endowment

I regard family allowances in cash as one species of the genus Family Endowment.

Family endowment means the direct allocation to children of part of the nation's resources—it means that the community, through the State, shares with parents the costs of child-rearing. The greater part of the cost might be met from social resources instead of out of the individual's wages. It might also mean that many things which to-day are financial alternatives to parenthood should be withdrawn from commercial enterprise and provided communally—especially in the field of cultural and leisure pursuits. There are many other species of family endowment which are quite as important as cash allowances for children. The exact scope for cash allowances can only be decided by regarding them as one of a series of measures included in one programme for the promotion of healthy parenthood by family endowment. Such a programme would include: (1) Measures to reduce the drudgery imposed on women by housework and maternity, so that women can take part more equally in the work, public and social life of the community. Family endowment in this field is mainly a matter of new social services, especially (a) an adequate housing plan for the whole community (including rent rebates) to minimize housework, with possibly free laundry, window-cleaning and other services, and (b) nursery schools or day nurseries for all children, holidays for parents *away* from their children, etc.

(2) Genuine equality of opportunity in education. This almost certainly involves free education for all and adequate maintenance allowances for higher education and vocational training of exceptional children.

(3) Free, equal and adequate medical services for all. This is even more important than free and equal education, and is again largely a matter of services. The entire population needs not only adequate anti-sickness services. Special services, covering every aspect of family life from marriage guidance and contraception to pregnancy diagnosis and freer abortion, are necessary to "rationalize" married life on the lines proposed in Sweden.

(4) Many other cheap or free services are conceivable. Children might eat free at

school, travel free up to school-leaving age, have free weekly visits to cinemas, theatres, concerts, or swimming baths.

All this does not exclude direct allowances to parents. But even here I believe that the value of cash allowances has been exaggerated. In some respects individual freedom of choice is vital, but with regard to a great range of commodities the complete freedom of choice afforded by money allowances is not necessary. Why not *give* each child a pint of milk daily, half a pound of butter or half a dozen oranges or eggs weekly, rather than pay parents money which they *may* spend on such foodstuffs? There is great scope for children's allowances in the form of free distribution of basic necessities. "*Earmarked money*," based on the existing children's ration coupons, would have to be used. Parents would receive in respect of each child coupons earmarked for specific commodities (or groups of commodities). These could be exchanged, without money payment, for definite quantities of milk, butter, eggs, oranges, cod-liver oil or other necessary foodstuffs. Coupons exchangeable for certain amounts of clothing or footwear for children might also be issued. Such a system would facilitate economic planning, would ensure a definite flow of basic necessities to those who need them, irrespective of retail price levels, and would secure to parents many of the benefits of bulk-buying. In war-time, when scarce supplies have to be shared out fairly, I believe such a system is essential if the purpose of coupon-rationing is not to be thwarted by the rationing of the poor (who include a large proportion of families with children) by rising prices. In

peace-time, as a measure to ensure that children enjoy an adequate minimum of the essentials of healthy growth, children's allowances in kind are preferable to allowances in cash. There might still be some scope for cash allowances, but we might find, as they found in Russia, that they are mainly of value for the exceptionally large family. In Russia cash allowances begin with the seventh child; in Britain they might begin with the fourth. But we must decide on the scope of family endowment by free services or by allowances in kind before we can determine the scope or type of cash-allowance scheme we wish to introduce.

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